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THE
Blazing-Star,
OR,
A DISCOURSE
OF
COMETS,
Their Natures and Effects.

Horace. Odes Lib. 4

*These Bug-Bear Meteors which the timorous Eyes
Of pavid Mortals do behold in Skies,
Let all rash Censures hang there in suspense,
Since every thing is rul'd by Providence.*

London, Printed for Francis Fox, 1664.





The Blazing-Star.

THe general Discourse of all sorts of people being concerning the Blazing Star, which by so many hath said to have of late been seen, hath invited my pen to write something thereof; no discourse either in Tavern, Alehouse, or Coffehouse, but of it what it should portend, and what other such like Comments have been seen before times; wherein it would make one smile to consider how various they are in their conjectures, every one fancying it doth portend what they would have come to pass; and people being in so many different mindes; it must therefore by consequence follow there must be diversity of opinions thereof: others are such nullifidians as not to believe any thing which they have not seen, and therefore having watched two or three nights fruitlessly, conclude it is onely a report raised, that hath no truth for its basis or foundation. Infinite many hundreds of people have put themselves to trouble and charges to behold it; so that it is said the Parish of *Islington* have gained by those that have repaired thither upon this account, some hundreds of pounds; so that we may conclude whatsoever this Star doth portend, it did portend profit to them.

It is said to be South-west from us, and doth as it were point towards *Belgium*, and those Netherland Countreyes; being judged by the eye to be about the bigness of a Peck, and that it bruseth out with a stream about three yards, according

according to apprehension; these Meteors or Comets very rare (scarce one in an age) are by the vulgar people beheld with great admiration, as betokening the destruction of some Nation or Countrey, or the death of some eminent Person; and thereupon they fancy to themselves strange whinzies and chymeras, as they did before upon *Lillies Black Monday*, when many Countrey people brought in their Cattle from the Fields and put them into houses, as a more secure place; as if the effects of that Eclipse could not hurt them within doors, which indeed was not so great nor so dark, but that the people could thereby see how they were deluded by that Astrologer.

These Comets or Blazing-Stars are hot fumes of a thick substance, like unto Glee; which being exhaled above in the air, and hovering aloft until it be blinded; if it mount very high it then becometh a Blazing or Burning Star, and continueth until such time his substance is exhausted: but if it mount not a great heighth, it then onely flies like a Squib through the Aire, and is such as we call shooting or falling Stars, and may be seen in a clear Winters night very often; although ignorant people will not be perswaded but that they are the Stars which thus fall; which if it should be so, the Sky in a short space would be empty.

But to return where we left concerning Blazing-Stars, we may finde in our Histories of many such which have happened in former Ages, of which our Chronicles abound with plenty of examples, one very memorable in the Year 1066. Of which *Stowe* in his Annals thus writeth.

*A thousand six and sixty years it is as doth appear,
Since that a Blazing Star appeared which put us in great
fear;*

*For Normans Duke King William then did unto Eng-
land go.*

*And with King Herald Battle joyn'd and him did over-
throw.*

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Many other examples could we produce out of our English Histories as well as Forreign, of many great Commets, or Blazing Stars which have appeared, and have been then by the people (as now) because things that were rare beheld with much astonishment and admiration. Now though the meanest things are not to be despised, nor the least omen to be condemned, yet would I not have the common people to build their faith so much upon these sights (because not common) as therefore to conclude that we must of necessity have some strange thing come to pass, either in this Land, or in some other, since the works of God are marvellous and above our apprehension, and therefore to rest contented, and leave the event of things to his will, and disposal; neither are these new things, our Chronicles (as I said) being so plentifully stored with examples of them, as of other of more strange nature; for we read that in *Anno 1545*. In the time of King *Henry the eighth*, there fell in *Lancashire* Hail Stones as big as mens fists, and that which is most strange, some were of the shape of mens faces, others were fashioned like Gun-holes, &c. Yea, we finde it credibly reported that in the *Indies* it hath rained Frogs; for the Sun and the rest of the Planets exhaling from the earth, the cold vapour of rain, from fensh and watery places, wherein Frogs were engendred: This being carried into the middle Region of the Aire, where by the extremity of cold it is thickned into the body of a Cloud, being driven thereabout by the winde, it doth afterwards dissolve and fall upon the earth, the Frogs being all this time carried about by the same means with the water, upon the dissolution doth with the rain fall together.

Some people who refer the grand Revelations of the world to the Year 1666. Wherein they expect the down-fall of the Pope, and other strange and wonderful busineses, make account that this is the fire-runner thereof: so apt are people to believe any novelty: thereby making good the words that one

ene said, *Sapientes olim astra ducunt jam insipientes decipiunt.* The Stars formerly led wiser men, and now play with fools. The example of Queen Elizabeth in this point is highly to be magnified; who being at Richmond at the time of a Comet in the year 1568 And being dissuaded by some of the Courtiers from looking thereon, as being destructive to Monarchical greatness: with a courage answerable to that port she alwayes carried, denied their requests; and causing the window to be opened, she thus said, *Facta est alea*, shewing thereby her stedfast hope and confidence was more firmly planted in the providence of God then to be blasted or affrighted with those sights which either had their original cause from nature, or at the most had no warrant from Scripture to portend the mishap of Princes, and it is very observable, that though she were a most excellent Princess, and ene who carried the hails in her own hand from all the Princes of Christendom, during the time of her whole Reign, wherein so many noble actions were performed; yet there was no Comet appeared before her death. (although in the beginning of her Reign there was. This I write onely to bring men off from that superstitious opinion that such Comets or Blazing-Stars are the certain fore-runners of the death of some eminent Person; whereas I am confident, had this new Star appeared a quarter of a year ago, it would have been by some constantly averred, that it did prestage the death of Count Serini, who (to the great loss of all Christendom) was unfortunately slain by a wilde Bore.

Well therefore may the words of the Prophet Jeremy be applied to this purpose. Be not dismayed at the signes of the heaven, for the Heathen are dismayed at them, Chap. 10. 2. To which may be added that saying in the Proverbs, *There is no new thing under the Sun*: and therefore one said wisely, *That he did not indeed fear any such signes, but the maker or causer of them.* For indeed it is onely our ignorance of things that makes them seem prodigious and miraculous unto us; where-

whereas if we knew the true cause, the wonder would soon decline, and seem less, so that what at first seemed monstrous and miraculous, would then become common, if not altogether slighted.

And yet granting that these Comets had such an influence as is pretended, yet we have it from good hands, and attested by persons of knowledge, that the effects of this strange Star do no wayes concern any of the Dominions of his Majesty of *Great Britain*: In vain therefore let the Phanaticks hope to reap a golden harvest to themselves, and think to gain Proselytes thereby, which may perhaps produce a new book of *Prodigies*, since as *Gemma Frisius* saith, who observed all the Comets that ever were, that he had noted as many good effects as bad which have succeeded them.

As for a particular instance, that glorious Star which appeared at the Birth of our Sovereign Lord King *Charles* the Second: what happiness it did portend to our Nation, I think no man can be ignorant, in the enjoyment of so great and gracious a Prince; one whose abilities and vertues are so far above my understanding, that I must rather lay down my pen and admire them, then any wayes think with my weak skill to set them forth: but this some may say was no Comet, but a divine direction or prophecy of the great good and inestimable benefits we do receive at this present by having so pious and prudent a Prince,

But to draw towards a conclusion, let not humane weakness be afraid of those things which have nothing to do with this world wherein we live, but rely on God, who hath given us a command *not to be afraid of the signes of heaven*: for how can the Comet discover future things, or have a knowledge of them: I approve therefore very much of *Vespasians* humour, who upon the appearance of a Comet, being told by some it portended his death, replied merrily, *No, this bushy Star denotes not me, but rather the Parthian King, for he wears bushy locks, but I am bald.*

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And therefore let people consider, that Comets take their own course as all other naturals do, and therefore of what concernment can they be with the Stars, that the Nations of mankind make with one another, that they should foreshew the Wars and Slaughters which will ensue: as if before there had been no Wars, or death of Princes, for by the same reason they may refer all the troubles and mischiefs which shall arise in the world until a new Comet doth appear, and make the former to be forgotten, unto that Comet which did precede.

Let none therefore trouble their heads with fear or disorder upon the appearance of such strange sights, or the direful effects, that some may pretend this Comet should signifie, but rather dispose our selves to the serious thoughts of what St. Peter delivers in his second Book and third Chapter, viz. *The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.* And that our fortune under God is in our own hands, and that nothing but sin can pull down any of these miseries upon us, which some would perswade this Comet might portend.

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